Ardaric

(Early 5th Century - Late 5th Century)

BRIEFING

Ardaric (Latin: Ardaricus; fl. c. 450 AD) was the king of the Gepids, a Germanic tribe closely related to the Goths. He was "famed for his loyalty and wisdom," one of the most trusted adherents of Attila the Hun, who "prized him above all the other chieftains." Ardaric is first mentioned by Jordanes as Attila's most prized vassal at the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains (451):

> *"The renowned king of the Gepidae, Ardaric, was there also with a countless host, and because of his great loyalty to Attila, he shared his plans. For Attila, comparing them in his wisdom, prized him and Valamir, king of the Ostrogoths, above all the other chieftains." (Jordanes, Getica, trans. C. C. Mierow, 1915)*

REBELLION

After Attila's death in 453, Ardaric led the rebellion against Attila's sons and routed them in the Battle of Nedao, thus ending the Huns' dominance in Eastern Europe. Since Attila's death, his eldest son Ellak had risen to power. Supported by Attila's chief lieutenant, Onegesius, he wanted to assert the absolute control with which Attila had ruled, while Attila's other two sons, Dengizik and Ernak, claimed kingship over smaller subject tribes.

In 454, Ardaric led his Gepid and Ostrogothic forces against Attila's son Ellak and his Hunnish army. The Battle of Nedao was a bloody but decisive victory for Ardaric, in which Ellak was killed. Ardaric's most immediate achievement was the establishment of his people in Dacia. His defeat of the Huns at the River Nedao reduced the threat of invasion posed to the Eastern Roman Empire.

THE BATTLE OF NEDAO

The Battle of Nedao was fought in Pannonia in 454 CE between the Huns and their former Germanic vassals. Nedao is believed to be a tributary of the Sava River.

Battle

After the death of Attila the Hun, allied forces of the subject peoples under the leadership of Ardaric, king of the Gepids, defeated the Hunnic forces of Ellac, the son of Attila, who had struggled with his brothers Ernak and Dengizich for supremacy after Attila's death. Ellac himself was killed in the battle.

According to the 6th-century historian Jordanes:

> *And so the bravest nations tore themselves to pieces. For then, I think, must have occurred a most remarkable spectacle, where one might see the Goths fighting with pikes, the Gepidae raging with the sword, the Rugii breaking off the spears in their own wounds, the Suavi fighting on foot, the Huns with bows, the Alani drawing up a battle-line of heavy-armed and the Heruli of light-armed warriors... ...after many grave clashes, victory surprisingly favours the Gepids for the sword and plotting of Ardaric killed nearly thirty thousand men, Huns as well as other tribes who brought them aid. In this battle, the eldest son of Attila, named Ellac, whom his father was said to have loved so much more than the rest that he favoured him above all his various sons in his empire, was killed.*

Modern views

Jordanes claimed that at the Battle of Nedao the Ostrogoths fought against the Huns, but this is rejected by modern historians such as Herwig Wolfram and Hyun Jin Kim. The latter believes that this is a forged story and that the Ostrogoth king Valamir himself fought alongside the Huns. Alternatively, J.R. Martindale and Franz Altheim accept that the Ostrogoths were among the victors of Nedao, while many others, including Otto J. Maenchen-Helfen, believe that none of this existed at all.

Aftermath

Hunnic dominance in Central and Eastern Europe was broken as a result of the battle. It is hard to reconstruct the exact course of events, but by the early 460s the Hunnic Empire was dissolved with the Gepids, Rugii, Heruli, Suebi, and Ostrogoths achieving independence and eventually becoming federates of the Eastern Roman Empire. The Huns, reorganized under Dengizich, moved to the east, where they attacked the Eastern Roman Empire and were decisively defeated in 469. After that point, the Huns cease to exist in European history.

DEATH AND LEGACY

Ardaric's year of death is unknown. The Gepid king Mundo (Mundonus), who ruled in the early 6th century, was probably his grandson.

The name Ardaricus is assumed to represent Germanic *Hardu-reiks; Schütte (1933) tentatively identified the Heiðrekr of Germanic legend with the historical Gepid king.

THE BATTLE OF THE GOTHS AND HUNS

Hlöðskviða (also **Hlǫðskviða** and **Hlǫðsqviða**), known in English as **The Battle of the Goths and Huns** and occasionally known by its German name **Hunnenschlachtlied**, is an Old Norse heroic poem found in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*. Many attempts have been made to try to fit it with known history, but it is an epic poem, telescoping and fictionalising history to a large extent; some verifiable historical information from the time are place names, surviving in Old Norse forms from the period 750–850, but it was probably collected later in Västergötland.

Most scholars place the tale sometime in the 4th and 5th centuries AD, with the battle taking place somewhere either in Central Europe near the Carpathian Mountains, or further east in European Russia.

Texts, historicity, and analysis

There are two main sources for the saga, "H", from the *Hauksbók* (A.M. 544) early 14th century; and "R", a 15th-century parchment (MS 2845). The final parts of the saga including *Hlöðskviða* are absent in H and truncated in R – the remainder of the text is found in better preserved 17th-century paper copies of these works.

The poem itself is thought to have originally been a stand-alone work, separate from the saga. It has several analogues, containing similar or related content, including the English *Widsith*, as well as *Orvar-Odd's Saga* and the *Gesta Danorum*.

The historicity of the "Battle of the Goths and Huns", including the identification of people, places, and events, has been a matter of scholarly investigation since the 19th century, with no clear answer. Locations proposed for the setting include a number of places around the Carpathian Mountains; the actual battle has been identified as either the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains (451 AD), between Flavius Aetius and the Visigoths under Theodoric I and the Huns under Attila; or a battle between the Gothic king Ostrogotha and the Gepid king Fastida; or a battle between the Langobards and the Vulgares (Bulgars) in which the Lombard king Agelmundus (Agelmund) was killed; or a post-Attila (d. 453) conflict between the Gepids and Huns, possibly during the reign of the Gepid Ardaric; another interpretation makes the Goths the Crimean Goths. The battle has alternatively been placed as early as 386 AD, a destruction of peoples under Odotheus in a battle on the River Danube. Similarities between the story in the saga and the Battle of Nedao have also been noted. The identification of persons in the poem with historical figures is equally confused. Additionally any historical date of the "Battle of Goths and Huns" (whatever the exact attribution to historical events) is several centuries earlier than the supposedly preceding events recorded in the saga.

Text

The poem is preserved as 29 separate strophes or parts of strophes interspersed among the text in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, of which most are narrative not speech. Much of the saga is now in prose form, though it is thought that the original had been verse, with some textual evidence in the prose for a verse original. Christopher Tolkien (Tolkien 1960) supposes that it originally formed a complete narrative in itself, outside of the context it is now found in the saga.

Some damaged verses were recorded differently by different editors, and the text shows signs of different dates of composition or recording in different parts of the text – including rich verses similar to those found in early eddaic poems such as *Atlakviða* or *Hamðismál*, whilst other lines are less rich.

Most editions number the stanzas, but the numbering may start from the first poetic stanza in the saga, not the poem.

Heiðrekr, king of the Goths, had two sons, Angantýr and Hlöðr. Only Angantýr was legitimate, so he inherited his father's kingdom. Hlöðr, whose mother was the daughter of Humli, king of the Huns, and who was born and raised among the Huns, claimed half the inheritance, Angantýr refused to split evenly and war ensued, claiming first Hervör, their sister, then Hlöðr himself as casualties.

The first verses frame peoples and their rulers. It is noteworthy that the Geats (*Gautar*) and their king Gizurr have been inserted directly after the Huns, where one logically would expect the Goths and their king Angantyr to appear.

Ár kváðu Humla *Húnum ráða,* *Gizur Gautum,* *Gotum Angantý,* *Valdarr Dǫnum,* *en Vǫlum Kjár,* *Alrekr inn frækni* *enskri þjóðu.*	*Of old they said Humli* *of Huns was the ruler,* *Gizur the Gautar,* *of Goths Angantyr,* *Valdar the Danes ruled,* *and the Valir Kjár,* *Alrek the valiant* *the English people*
Original text	**(Tolkien 1960, (75) pp.45–6)**

Valdar is also named as a king of the Danes in *Guðrúnarkviða II*.

After Heiðrekr's death, Hlöðr travels to Árheimar to claim half of the Gothic realm as his inheritance. His demand refers to the forest on the boundary separating the Goths and the Huns and to a "holy grave", apparently an important sanctuary of the Goths, but its background is unknown.

hrís þat it mæra,	*the renowned forest*
er Myrkviðr heitir,	*that is named Mirkwood,*
grǫf þá ina helgu,	*the hallowed grave*
er stendr á Goðþjóðu,	*in Gothland standing,*
stein þann inn fagra,	*that fair-wrought stone*
er stendr á stǫðum Danpar,	*beside the Dniepr,*
hálfar herváðir,	*half the armor*
þær er Heiðrekr átti,	*owned by Heidrek,*
lǫnd ok lýða	*land and liegemen*
ok ljósa bauga.	*and lustrous rings!*
Original text	**(Tolkien 1960, (82) pp.48–9)**

Angantýr offers Hlöðr a third of his realm, and Gizur, Heiðrekr's old foster-father, says that this is more than enough for the son of a slave. On Hlöðr's return to the Hunnic realm, his grandfather Humli is enraged at the insult and gathers the army of the Huns.

The poem ends with Angantýr finding his brother dead:

Bǫlvat es okkr, bróðir,	*We are cursed, kinsman,*
bani em ek þinn orðinn;	*your killer am I!*
þat mun æ uppi,	*It will be never forgotten;*
illr er dómr norna.	*the Norns's doom is evil.*
Original text	**(Tolkien 1960, (103) pp.57–8)**

THE SAGA OF HERVÖR AND HEIDREK

Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks (The Saga of Hervör and Heidrek) is a legendary saga from the 13th century combining matter from several older sagas in Germanic heroic legend. It tells of wars between the Goths and the Huns during the 4th century. The final part of the saga, which was likely composed separately from and later than the rest, is a source for Swedish medieval history.

The saga may be most appreciated for its memorable imagery, as seen in a quotation from one of its translators, Nora Kershaw Chadwick, on the invasion of the Huns:

> *Hervör standing at sunrise on the summit of the tower and looking southward towards the forest; Angantyr marshalling his men for battle and remarking dryly that there used to be more of them when mead drinking was in question; great clouds of dust rolling over the plain, through which glittered white corslet and golden helmet, as the Hunnish host came riding on.*

The text contains several poetic sections: the *Hervararkviða*, on Hervor's visit to her father's grave and her retrieval of the sword Tyrfing; another, the *Hlöðskviða*, on the battle between Goths and Huns; and a third, containing the riddles of Gestumblindi.

It has inspired later writers and derivative works, such as J. R. R. Tolkien when shaping his legends of Middle-earth. His son, Christopher Tolkien translated the work into English as *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*.

Manuscripts

There are three medieval recensions of the saga, each of which is an independent witness to its lost archetype, and which together are the basis for all post-medieval manuscripts of the saga. These are known as versions *R*, *H*, and *U*. The saga continued to be copied in manuscript into the nineteenth century, and the relationships of the surviving manuscripts and the ways in which they vary has been studied in detail.

R is the version found in the fifteenth-century parchment manuscript Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, MS 2845, formerly held in the Danish Royal Library at Copenhagen. The manuscript is fragmentary, today containing the saga only into chapter 12, that is within the poem on the battle of Goths and Huns. R is in most respects closest witness to the lost archetype of *Heiðreks saga*.

U is the version best attested in a seventeenth-century paper manuscript, Uppsala, University Library, R 715. Another early witness to parts of this version is the seventeenth-century paper manuscript Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 203 fol. This contains a copy of R, but where R breaks off it then continues with text from a common ancestor with R 715. The version dramatically reworks the saga, adding a new opening chapter and including alterations sourced from other sagas, including from the *Rímur* reworking of the same tale, the *Hervarar Rímur*.

H (Hauksbók: Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 544), dates to c. 1325. This parchment manuscript is today fragmentary, containing the story up to the end of Gestumblindi's second riddle, but two early copies (AM 281 4to) and (AM 597b) record parts of H now lost. H is a conflation of an early version of the saga similar to that preserved in R, and the U-version of the saga. Thus although it is found in the earliest surviving manuscript, H is the third known recension of the saga.

There are many other paper manuscripts of the saga that were copied in the seventeenth century from the manuscripts mentioned above. These include AM 192, AM 193, AM 202 k, AM 354 4to, AM 355 4to, and AM 359 a 4to.

Synopsis

All the different manuscripts of the saga tell a similar story, though with many variations of detail (in particular, the U- and H-versions open with a mythic tale of Guðmundr of Glæsisvellir).

The saga deals with the sword Tyrfingr and how it was forged and cursed by the dwarfs Dvalinn and Durin for king Svafrlami. Later, Svafrlami loses it to the berserker Arngrímr of Bolmsö. The sword provides a common link throughout the saga, being passed down through the generations in Arngrímr's family, particularly the saga's main protagonists, Hervör and her son Heiðrekr. This magical sword shares a common property with other mythological weapons such as Dáinsleif and Bödvar Bjarki's sword in *Hrolf Kraki's Saga* that, once it has been drawn, it cannot be sheathed until it has drawn blood.

Arngrímr passes Tyrfingr to his son Angantýr. Angantýr dies during a *holmganga* (duel) on Samsø against the Swedish hero Hjálmarr, whose friend Örvar-Oddr buries the cursed sword in a barrow with Angantýr's body.

Tyrfingr is retrieved from the barrow by Angantýr's daughter, the shieldmaiden Hervör, who summons her dead father to claim her inheritance. This section mixes prose with extensive quotations from a poem known today as *Hervarakviða*, which largely comprises dialogue between Hervör and her father.

Then the saga relates how Hervör marries and has a son Heiðrekr, who becomes king of Reiðgotaland. Heiðrekr spends his youth systematically contravening the good advice given to him by his father and fathering sons on several different women. Eventually, he settles down and becomes a wise king. At this point in the saga, Heiðrekr is killed after a riddle contest with Óðinn (who is disguised as Gestumblindi). The riddles of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* are all in verse and constitute the main surviving evidence for medieval Scandinavian riddling.

After Heiðrekr's death, his sons Angantýr and Hlöðr wage a great battle over their father's inheritance. Hlöðr is aided by the Huns, to whom his mother belonged, but nonetheless Angantýr defeats and kills him. This section of the saga too quotes extensively from a poem describing this battle between the Huns and Goths.

The end of the saga is only preserved in the U-recension. This version relates that Angantýr had a son, Heiðrekr Ulfhamr, who was king of Reiðgotaland for a long time. Heiðrekr's daughter Hildr was the mother of Hálfdanr the Valiant, who was the father of Ívarr Víðfaðmi. After Ívarr, there follows a list of Swedish kings, both real and semi-legendary, ending with Philip Halstensson. However, this king-list was probably composed separately from the rest of the saga and integrated into it in later redactions.

Origins and development

The saga tells the history of the family of Hervör and Heidrek over several generations. Then, the story turns to the sons of Arngrim, a Viking Age tale also told in the *Hyndluljóð*. Next, the tale tells of Hervör, daughter of Angantyr; then of Heidrek son of Hervör. At this point, the setting of the tale changes from the Kingdom of the Goths to somewhere in Eastern Europe (c. 4th–5th century); finally, the tale returns to the historically later date. Kershaw considers that the latter part of the tale involving the Huns and Goths has an origin separate from that of the earlier parts and, in chronological time, is actually taking place several centuries earlier.

In addition to attempts to understand the relationship between the events in the saga and real-world historical characters, events, and places, the manuscripts and contents are also useful to research into the attitudes and cultures of the periods in which they were composed or written down. Hall thinks the text derives ultimately from oral tradition, not from the invention of an author.

Hall believes the poem *Hervararkviða* (or 'The Waking of Angantýr') was composed specifically for a narrative closely akin to the tale told in *Heiðreks saga*, as it is consistent in style and forms a consistent narrative link between the events in the tale. Tolkien considers it unequivocally older than the saga itself. The exact nature of the original underlying narrative for the poem is a matter of scholarly debate. Some passages of the poetry in *Heiðreks saga* also appear in variant forms in *Örvar-Odd's saga* (lines 97–9, 103-6), and the outline story of the duel between Arngrímr and Hjálmarr also appears in books 5 and 6 of the *Gesta Danorum*. There are also elemental plot similarities between the saga and *Sturlaugs saga starfsama* up to the point that a protagonist receives the magic sword from a female figure; Hall surmises that the two may share a narrative origin.

The section of the saga concerning Heiðrekr's disregard for his father's advice is common to a widely known family of tales (called by Knut Liestøl "The Good Counsels of the Father"). In general there are three counsels; in the saga, a set of three (1st, 2nd, and 6th) fit together. Tolkien proposes that after the counsels were introduced into the work, further counsels were added, further extending that theme through the saga.

The poem *Hlöðskviða* (or "Battle of the Goths and Huns") has numerous analogues that overlap in topical coverage. The oldest of these is thought to be the Old English poem *Wīdsith*. Several of the characters who appear in the battle of the Goths and Huns appear are mentioned in this poem: Heiðrekr (Heaþoric), Sifka (Sifeca), Hlǫðr (Hliðe), and Angantýr (Incgenþeow). Tolkien considers that the poem, though seemingly considerably altered over time, once formed part of a continuous poetic narrative that gave a complete description of the Goth-Hun conflict and existed as a separate work.

In the 17th century, when the Norse sagas became a subject of interest to scholars, they were initially taken as reasonably accurate depictions of historical events. Later, in the 19th and 20th centuries, scholars realized that they were not completely historically accurate.

Carl Christian Rafn (Rafn 1850) considered that the battle between Goths and Huns was a legendary retelling of the battle between the Gothic king Ostrogotha and the Gepid king Fastida, which was described by Jordanes in Ch. 17 of his history of the Goths. Richard Heinzel (Heinzel 1887), in his analysis *Über die Hervararsaga*, suggested the battle described was the same as the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains (451 CE), identifying Angantyr as the Roman general Aetius and Hlothr as the Frankish Chlodio, with the incorporation of parts of the general Litorius, whereas the Vandal Geiseric is the prototype for Gizurr Grytingalithi. Rudolf Much (Much 1889) proposed alternative attributions for the battles. One, recorded by Paul the Deacon, took place between the Langobards and the *Vulgares* Bulgars; in that battle, *Agelmundus* (Agelmund) was killed, and his sister (conflated with Hervor) is taken prisoner. In the other battle, the new Langobardian king Lamissio is victorious; Much conflates this battle with that of the Goths and Huns. He also identifies the battlefields to be north of the River Danube in the Carpathian Mountains, near modern-day Kraków.

In the latter half of the 19th century, Heinzel's theory was predominant and widely accepted. Later, Gustav Neckel and Gudmund Schütte further analyzed the textual and historical information. Neckel placed the events after the death of Attila (d. 453 CE) during the later Gepid-Hun conflicts, whereas Schütte identified either Heithrekr or Heathoric as transformations of the name of the Gepid king Ardaric. In the early 1900s, Henrik Schück and Richard Constant Boer both rejected Heinzel's attribution and the link with Attila. Schück split the legend of the strife between brothers from that of the Goth-Hun war, as well as their geographic locations, and identified both sites as being in southern Russia. Boer associated the Dunheithr with the Daugava River but placed the battle further north in central European Russia, in the Valdai Hills.

Further scholarship in the 20th century added more name and place attributions, with Otto von Friesen and Arwid Johannson returning to the western end of the Carpathians; Hermann Schneider placing the Goths in the Black Sea area (Crimean Goths); and Niels Clausen Lukman reanalyzing the tale, not in the context of Jordanes' history but in that of Ammianus Marcellinus. Lukman shifted the date to 386 CE, when a mass migration of peoples under Odotheus (conflated with Hlothr) was destroyed by the Romans on the Danube; in his reconstruction Heithrekr is the visigothic Athanaric. In an analysis of parts of the tale, (Tolkien 1953) identifies the place where Angantyr revenges his father's (Heithrekr) killing by slaves as being at the foot of the Carpathians, using linguistic analysis based on consonant shifts (see Grimm's Law) in the term "Harvath Mountains". The place *Árheimar* in *Danparstathir* mentioned in association is unidentified, though "Danpar-" has been assumed to be some form of the river Dnieper. Similarities with the Battle of Nedao (454 CE) have also been noted.

It is a testimony to its great age that names appear in genuinely Germanic forms and not in any form remotely influenced by Latin. Names for Goths appear that ceased to be used after 390 CE, such as *Grýting* (cf. the Latin form *Greutungi*) and *Tyrfing* (cf. the Latin form *Tervingi*). The events take place where the Goths lived during the wars with the Huns. The Gothic capital Árheimar is located on the Dniepr (*...á Danparstöðum á þeim bæ, er Árheimar heita...*), King Heidrek dies in the Carpathians (*...und Harvaða fjöllum*), and the battle with the Huns takes place on the plains of the Danube (*...á vígvöll á Dúnheiði í Dylgjudölum*). The mythical *Myrkviðr* [Mirkwood] that separates the Goths from the Huns appears to correspond to the Maeotian marshes.

Influence, legacy and adaptions

Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks was one source for the fifteenth-century Icelandic poem *Ormars rímur* (probably via a now-lost prose saga), in which the hero Ormarr visits his father's burial mound to convince his dead father to give him his sword.

Traditions appearing in the saga have also been preserved in several Scandinavian medieval ballads and *rímur*, i.e. the Danish *Angelfyr og Helmer kamp*, the Faroese *Hjálmar og Angantýr*, *Arngrims synir*, *Gátu rima*, and in the Swedish *Kung Speleman*. The Faroese ballad, *Gátu ríma* ('riddle poem') was collected in the 19th century; it is thought by some scholars to derive from the riddle-contest in the saga.

At the beginning of the 18th century, George Hickes published a translation of the *Hervararkviða* in his *Linguarum veterum septentrionalium thesaurus grammatico-criticus et archæologicus*. Working from Verelius's 1671 translations (Verelius 1671), with the aid of a Swedish scholar, he presented the entire poem in half-line verse similar to that used in Old English poetry (see Old English metre). It was the first full Icelandic poem translated into English, and it aroused interest in England in such works. The work was reprinted in Dryden's *Poetical Miscellanies* (1716) and by Thomas Percy in amended form as *"The Incantation of Hervor"* in his *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* (1763).

Hickes's publication inspired various "Gothic" and "Runic odes" based on the poem, of varying quality and faithfulness to the original. (Wawn 2002) states "[T]he cult of the ubiquitous eighteenth-century poem known as 'The Waking of Angantyr' can be traced directly to its door."

The *Hervararkviða* poem was translated fairly closely into verse by Beatrice Barmby and included in her *Gísli Súrsson: a Drama* (1900); and into a more "Old English" style by (Smith-Dampier 1912) in *The Norse King's Bridal*. *Hjálmar's Death-Song* was translated by W. Herbert in his *Select Icelandic Poetry.*

The French poet Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle adapted the *Hervararkviða* in the poem *"L'Épée d'Angantyr"* [*Angantyr's Sword*] in his *Poèmes barbares*.

Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar wrote the opera *Tirfing* as an adaptation of the Hervor-section of the saga using her as the opera's lead protagonist.

There is much in this saga that readers of J. R. R. Tolkien's work will recognize, most importantly the riddle contest. There are, for instance, warriors similar to the Rohirrim, brave shieldmaidens, Mirkwood, haunted barrows yielding enchanted swords (see Barrow-downs), an epic battle, and two dwarfs named Dwalin and Durin.

HEIDREK

Heidrek or Heiðrekr (Old Norse: [ˈhɛiðˌrekz̠]) is one of the main characters in the cycle about the magic sword Tyrfing. He appears in the *Hervarar saga*, and probably also in *Widsith*, together with his sons Angantyr (*Incgentheow*) and Hlöð (*Hlith*), and Hlöð's mother Sifka (*Sifeca*). The etymology is *heiðr*, meaning "honour", and *rekr*, meaning "ruler, king".

Youth

Heidrek was the son of king Höfund and his wife Hervor, a shieldmaiden. Like his mother in her youth, he was ill-natured and violent. To amend this, he was raised by the wise Geatish king Gizur, but this did not improve his disposition. One day, when his parents were having a banquet, Heidrek arrived uninvited and late at night, he started a quarrel which ended in manslaughter. His father, King Höfund, banished Heidrek from his kingdom, although Hervor did her utmost to soften Höfund's feelings against his son.

His father's advice

However, before Heidrek left, his father gave him some words of advice:

> *"Never help a man who has betrayed his master.*
>
> *Never give peace to a man who has murdered his friend.*
>
> *Don't allow your wife to visit her family frequently, even though she insists on doing so.*
>
> *Never tell your loved one about your secret thoughts.*
>
> *If you're in a hurry, never ride your best horse.*
>
> *Never punish the son of a better man.*
>
> *Never break a promise about peace.*
>
> *Never have many thralls in your company."*

Heidrek immediately decided never to follow his father's advice.

Departing

Hervor secretly gave her son the sword Tyrfing as she bade him farewell, and his brother Angantyr kept him company for a while. When they had walked for some time, Heidrek wanted to have a look at the sword. Since he had unsheathed it, the curse the dwarves had put on the sword made him kill his brother.

Adventures

After a while, Heidrek met a patrol moving a prisoner who was to be executed because he had murdered his master. He remembered his father's advice and resolved to buy the criminal. Then he continued his journey and met a patrol moving a scoundrel who had killed his comrade. Likewise, Heidrek bought the man's life in order to disobey his father.

Soon, Heidrek arrived in Reidgotaland, entered the Gothic king Harald's service, and disposed of two rebellious jarls for him. This earned him half the Gothic kingdom and the king's daughter, Helga. Heidrek and Helga had a son who was named Angantyr after Heidrek's brother and grandfather. During the same time old King Harald had a son who was named Halfdan.

Unfortunately, Reidgotaland was struck with bad crops and starvation. The goðar (heathen priests) determined that they must sacrifice the most noble young man of the kingdom to Odin in order to restore good crops. Immediately, people started to quarrel about which of the princes was the most noble, and so they asked king Höfund of Glæsisvellir. King Höfund decided that it was Angantyr (Harald's own grandson) who was the most noble prince. Höfund also told Heidrek to ask King Harald that in recompense for sacrificing his own son, he should receive half the Gothic army as his own. King Harald agreed to this.

However, when Höfund called for a thing in order to sacrifice Angantyr, Heidrek objected and said that Odin would be happy if instead of Angantyr, he received King Harald and his son Halfdan. Then, Heidrek made a coup d'état with his half of the Gothic army, using Tyrfing to kill King Harald and his son. When his wife Helga heard the news, she committed suicide by hanging herself.

King of the Goths

Heidrek used his army to subjugate the Gothic kingdom and ruled with brutal force. He defeated Humli, the king of the Huns, and captured his daughter Sifka, whom he raped. When she became pregnant, she was sent back to her father's kingdom, where she bore a son who was named Hlöd.

Heidrek married Olof, the daughter of Åke, the King of the Saxons. She often asked to go home to visit her family, and since Heidrek remembered his father's advice, he always gladly consented. This would turn out to be an unwise strategy, because one day he made the journey to Saxony in order to see his wife among her family. He found her in the arms of a blond thrall and immediately divorced her.

Instead, he married a girl from Finland who was named Sifka, like the Hunnic princess. One day, they were visiting king Rollaug of Gardariki. To oppose a fourth word of advice given by his father, he told Sifka a secret and asked her to swear an oath never to tell anyone. The secret was that he had accidentally killed King Rollaug's son in a hunting accident.

Naturally, Sifka immediately ran to King Rollaug and told him the secret, which caused King Rollaug to capture Heidrek and to kill all of his retinue. The two men who bound him were none other than the two culprits he had saved from the gallows.

When king Rollaug was about to burn Heidrek alive, someone broke the news that the prince was still alive and that Heidrek was innocent. Rollaug apologized and in recompense for Heidrek's losses he gave him his own daughter, Hergerd.

Heidrek and Hergerd had a daughter who was named Hervor, the shieldmaiden, after his mother who had just died. This was the beginning of a time of peace for Heidrek.

During a voyage, Heidrek camped at the Carpathians (*Harvaða fjöllum*, cf. Grimm's law). He was accompanied by eight mounted thralls, and while Heidrek slept, the thralls broke into his tent, took Tyrfing and slew Heidrek.

This was the last one of Tyrfing's three evil deeds. Heidrek's son Angantyr caught the thralls, killed them and reclaimed the magic sword, but the curse had ceased.